

# Fears, mistrust reduced

By Shamsul Huq Zahid

President Lt. Gen. H. M. Ershad, who is also the Chairman of the first SAARC summit told a post-summit press conference on Sunday that the summit had "certainly" reduced fears and mistrust among SAARC member-nations and created an atmosphere congenial to resolving outstanding bilateral issues.

President Ershad addressed the crowded press conference sitting on a flag decked dais of the Committee Room of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, the summit venue.

The summit Chairman termed the launching of SAARC as

a momentous event and said that for the time in the history of South Asian Region, countries now have an institutional arrangement for periodic consultations at the highest level and to concert efforts in the economic, social and other spheres for improving the quality of life of peoples of the region.

He said that summit meeting had been characterised by a remarkable degree of warmth, enthusiasm and understanding. There had been a clear stress on the part of all leaders that to make the new organisation viable and in time transform it into an important instru-

ment for co-operation and peace.

President Ershad said that no acrimonious bilateral issues would be discussed in the newly launched SAARC forum. He, however, said, "We have created an atmosphere in which seven South Asian countries can sit and discuss. All outstanding issues can be resolved through this organisation."

President Ershad said that there was a possibility of including trade as an area for co-operation among SAARC member nations in an "appropriate time". He said that the summiters had discussed the issue.

The SAARC Chairman said the SAARC did welcome the Nepalese King Birendra's offer to harness her vast resources for mutual benefit of the countries of the region.

President Ershad termed as unfounded the apprehension that in course of economic co-operation, less developed members would turn into hinterland of the more developed members.

He said that the summiters had confined their discussions within regional issues and that had not discussed the Afghanistan or Kampuchea issue.

On a question on terrorism, the summit Chairman said that the South Asian leaders had a positive attitude towards terrorism. The leaders had asked the Foreign Secretaries to form study groups to look into the drug abuse and terrorism issues and recommend measures how to combat those problems.

He informed that till a Secretariat of SAARC was selected,

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## Other side of summit

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It was just 60 seconds from four in the afternoon on Sunday when the history was made with a strike of a hammer by summit Chairman President H. M. Ershad who declared "the charter is hereby adopted" and SAARC was born.

Delegates, guests, diplomats applauded to give a standing ovation to the summiters — two Kings, four Presidents and a Prime Minister. The South Asian leaders greeted each other warmly with the flag decked dais of the plenary Hall of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban throbbing in happiness.

Seven Jamdani clad volunteers carried seven copies of the Charter in dark brown files and made their rotations to seven Heads of State and Government as they (leaders) put their signature on the historic document by golden pens specially imported from U.S.A.

Nepalese monarch Birendra Bikram Shah Dev proposed that the draft charter be adopted by acclamation.

After the signing of the Charter, Bhutanese King, Prime Minister of India, President of Maldives, King of Nepal, President of Pakistan and President of Sri Lanka delivered their speeches.

Pakistan President Gen. Zia-ul Haq left the dais at 4-19 p.m. to say his Asr prayers when Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was about to finish his statement at the concluding session. President Zia

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President Ershad addressing a Press conference as SAARC Chairman. —Times